

Brandon University Trio

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February 6, 1990

4 pm

Walter Hall

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PROGRAM

Trio Classico

Kenneth Nichols

- I. Adagio-Appassionato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Largo, Moderato, Animato

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1967)

S.C. Eckhardt-Gramatte

Lento, ma non troppo
Vivemento rhythmico

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1907)

Alexis Contant

allegretto, avec beaucoup d'expression
andantino

TODAY'S ARTISTS

Formerly the Halifax Trio which was founded in 1957, the Trio took its new name ten years later to commemorate the incorporation of Brandon University and became its trio-in-residence. Today it is one of Canada's more distinguished and celebrated ensembles and has gained this reputation through its concertizing, recordings and extensive series of recital performances for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Gordon Macpherson and Francis Chaplin are original members of this group, while Ingemar Ohlsson has been with the group since his arrival in Canada in 1985.

GORDON MACPHERSON has had a distinguished career as a pianist, conductor, arranger, and as a CBC music consultant. He has been active as a performer on national radio and television and was also associated with the Maritime Conservatory of Music as head of its piano department and as Acting Director. Since coming to Brandon, he has also been professor of piano and chamber music as well as Dean of the School of Music for six years.

FRANCIS CHAPLIN, originally from Newcastle, New Brunswick, is a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music in New York City. He is recognized as one of Canada's outstanding solo violinists and in addition to solo recitals and guest appearances with major Canadian orchestras, his career has included extensive national broadcasting on both radio and television. At Brandon University he is professor of violin and viola.

INGEMAR OHLSSON came to Canada from Sweden where he established an international reputation as a solo cellist. Having studied at the Prague Academy in Czechoslovakia and in Helsinki, Finland, he has performed most of the cello concerto repertoire with orchestras throughout Sweden and he has concertized extensively, both as soloist and as a member of the famous Epos Trio. He is professor of cello and conductor of the orchestra at Brandon University.

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NOTES

Trio Classico

Kenneth Nichols

Trio Classico was commissioned by the Brandon University Trio on a Manitoba Arts Council grant for their 1989/1990 season. Most of it was written in the summer of 1989 at the Leighton Artist Colony in Banff, Alberta. The term "classico" is reflected by the Trio's three clearly defined movements --

Adagio-appassionato; Scherzo; Dirge, Chorale and Fugato -- by its formal introduction, rhythmic gestures, and instrumental dialogue. Serial writing (a contemporary classical technique) is used exclusively in the Scherzo. The slow introduction to the first movement states the row fully; the remainder of the sonata movement draws heavily upon it. The cantus firmus of the Dirge, the interludes in the Chorale, the subject of the fugato, and the first theme of the Appassionato movement use another row based on the name of a departed loved one. The chorale is of the composer's own devising.

The Trio is dedicated to the Brandon University Trio.

Kenneth Nichols is a professor of Piano and Theory/Composition at the School of Music, Brandon University.

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1967)

S.C. Eckhardt-Gramatte

"The *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano* is a late work of Eckhardt-Gramatté. It was commissioned by the Marta Hidy Trio and was first performed at the University of Manitoba in 1968. It is a dense and complicated work, but not without rewards for the serious listener. It is in two clearly defined movements, the first sustained and expressive, the second nervous and energetic.

The way the composer writes for the three instruments in her later works is highly distinctive. The piano, for instance, seldom produces what could be called a melody, but instead attempts to build large blocks of sound, in effect, trying to get the piano to "ring" and, as it might be observed, this often comes dangerously close to drowning out the other instruments. Great demands are put upon the violinist and cellist who must often grab two, three and sometimes four notes in each chord in addition to having to play with a powerful tone. As has been noted, Eckhardt-Gramatté's compositional career grew out of a virtuoso performing career and her writing for these instruments was very closely tied to her own technique on them.

The opening bars of the *Trio* contain the three structural elements used throughout the work, the falling seventh (or "sigh" motive) in the cello, the descending four-note passage in the violin, and the gentle "rocking" theme in the piano. These ideas are engaged over and over again throughout the movement, sometimes inverted, sometimes augmented, sometimes extended. The composer's indications to the musicians are *molto espressivo*, very calm, suave, and she uses the three main musical ideas as "cells" or structural building blocks with which to construct her work. The final section of the first movement is a series of echoes, based on the "sigh" motive, which eventually find their way into the upper reaches of the violin and fade away.

The second movement, in contrast to the first, is more aggressive, and more flighty of mood. It is organized, however, by many musical sequences. Right in the first few bars, for instance, the violin and cello play a short rhythmical phrase which is immediately imitated by the piano. Musical figures

such as these, while not developed in the usual sense, provide a kind of patchwork quilt of ideas, when heard together, create an interesting effect of unity by the alternating and recurring patches.

Dramatic touches abound in this movement: *glissandi* in the strings, rumblings in the piano, sudden and repeated crescendos. There is even a playful section, and a section that seems to be full of musical quotes: brief, melodic themes quickly suppressed by sharp dissonances. A passionate middle section is based on a rich theme which builds to a *fortissimo* climax in all three instruments. After this highpoint, all the earlier ideas return: the dramatic crescendos, the playful sections, etc.

Curiously, the *Trio* ends analogously, cut short at the height of activity, as if a noisy, fast moving train rushed into a long tunnel disappeared."

-- Program note by Michael Pisani

Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano (1907)

Alexis Contant

"Alexis Contant (1858-1918) was one of Canada's true musical pioneers. Born in Montreal, he received his first piano lessons from his mother, then studied with Joseph Fowler, the organist of St. Patrick's Cathedral. In 1875, young Contant began working with Calixa Lavallée (1842-1891), the composer of "O Canada", and in 1880, Contant was named Professor of Music at the Collège de l'Assomption.

Contant was well-known as a teacher, counting among his many pupils such distinguished Canadian musicians as J.J. Gagnier and Wilfrid Pelletier. Contant's works include two masses for soloists, choir and orchestra, two oratorios, *Caïn* and *Les Deux Ames*, motets, piano pieces and chamber music.

His *Trio* was composed in 1906/07 and was first performed at the Monument National in Montreal on November 13th, 1907 by Albert Chamberland, violin, M. Borwick, piano, and Jean-Baptiste Dubois, cello.

The *Trio's* opening movement is the most "composed" in the work: one feels the undoubted influence of the nineteenth century French School throughout, but with a particular elegiac quality which is Contant's own.

Jean Yves Contant, the composer's grandson, considers the slow movement "as the most successful of the three. Starting with a theme of a charming melodic cut, the music develops with romantic arabesques, sometimes even sounding Fauréan.

"The *Finale* is a sort of "tarentelle burlesque", as a reviewer of the time mentions. 'Short, lighthearted and bounding along in the manner of the salon musical of the period, it nevertheless ends the *Trio* with high spirits and *brio*.'"

